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1968

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Recommended Citation

South Dakota State University, Cooperative Extension, "Preparing Fabric for Cutting" (1968). *SDSU Extension Fact Sheets*. 855.

https://openprairie.sdstate.edu/extension_fact/855

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Preparing Fabric for Cutting



COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE
SOUTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Preparing Fabric for Cutting

Before cutting, study your fabric and its label carefully. Determine if it needs shrinking, if it is "on grain" and if it is free of surface problems such as creases or inconsistencies in color or texture.

WOOL

There is no accurate way to figure out how much, if any, various pieces of wool will shrink. Some "special purchase" or outlet store fabrics may shrink considerably. These fabrics often are not thoroughly relaxed when finished and so relax more than normal when dampened. If fabric is going to shrink several inches, it is far better that it does so *before* than after cutting. When suspicious of this problem, buy a few extra inches to allow for this loss.

Though most wools do not change appearance when properly shrunk, the more lacy, open woven types may change. If you decide to cut without pre-shrinking, then plan to have all cleaning and pressing of the finished garment done by a quality dry cleaning establishment where the garment can be blocked to its original size.

Some wool fabrics are labeled "sponged and shrunk," "ready-for-the-needle," or just "preshrunk," none of which are guarantees against a stated amount of shrinkage. Some also state that the manufacturer won't stand back of this fabric if it is further shrunk. Here again, you must make the decision. But do keep in mind that nothing is gained from by-passing the shrinking process to preserve the fabric finish if the finish will be lost anyway through pressing during construction.

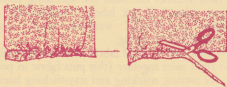
Commercial steam shrinking is another way of handling the problem. But, be certain to choose a quality cleaner who can assure the return of grain perfect fabric.

If you decide to preshrink, try the "London Shrunk" method. The London Shrunk method has a three-fold purpose: (1) to shrink, (2) to bring fabric "on grain," and (3) to avoid an uneven finish on fabric after garment is constructed.

Some fabrics lose their finish when pressed with steam. This means that the entire piece should have finish removed before cutting. Test a corner of fabric. If pressed area looks duller than rest of fabric or if it appears softer in texture, the London Shrunk method will evenly remove the finish.

The "London Shrunk" Method

1. First, check the raw ends of the piece of fabric for straightness (should follow crosswise thread). Some fabrics can be torn from the bolt, others have to be cut. If torn, they are automatically on a straight, crosswise grain line. If cut, then select a crosswise grain thread. Pull it as far as it will go. When it breaks, cut as far as the line is visible and repeat until entire width is straightened. If too much fabric is lost, do not cut. Instead, run a basting thread along the crosswise grain line.



2. During manufacture, fabric may lose its true right angle construction. After straightening, it may not lie with both selvages together, as well as both ends. Fold fabric lengthwise with right sides and ends together. Baste stitch across ends.
3. Wet a sheet thoroughly in lukewarm water, wring out (sheet should not be too wet) and fold lengthwise.
4. Smooth out fabric on flat surface, place dampened sheet on top. Sheet should extend beyond fabric to completely cover.



5. Fold over end of fabric and continue for one-half of length. Fold from opposite end to meet first half at center. Keep fabric and sheet free from wrinkles as you fold.
6. Cover folded fabric with a dampened towel or pillowcase and wrap in plastic to keep outside from drying.
7. Let stand 6-8 hours or overnight until wool absorbs all moisture.
8. Unfold — sheet will feel dry and wool will be uniformly damp.
9. Lay fabric on flat surface. Protect surface with a plastic tablecloth placed under dampened fabric. Smooth and shape so all grain lines are perfect. Do not press with iron. Let fabric dry naturally so it shrinks more evenly. Turn fabric over once.

COTTON AND LINEN

Today's technical "know how" in fabric finishing greatly reduces the need for shrinking cotton and linen fabrics. If not labeled "Sanforized" or guaranteed "preshrunk," washable fabrics need preshrinking before cutting.

1. Straighten both ends of fabric on crosswise grain.
2. Fold right sides together (this puts fabric in position for cutting, marking and staystitching later).
3. Baste stitch across each end, keeping fabric exactly on grain.
4. Thoroughly dampen fabric by sprinkling on a flat surface or by folding and letting it soak in a vessel of lukewarm water for 5 minutes. Squeeze out (do not wring) water, unfold and

spread out on a flat surface to dry. Or you may damp dry in a dryer. Never hang.

5. After thoroughly dry, remove bastings. Then steam press fabric in the lengthwise grain direction. Do not press over lengthwise fold as crease may be impossible to remove.

SILK AND MAN-MADE FIBERS

Most fabrics such as silk, rayon, acetate, and chemical man-made fibers in this grouping do not need preshrinking. Check the label.

If the fabric is off grain, try straightening by pressing with a steam iron.

COMBINATIONS OR BLENDS OF FIBERS

Check label for fiber content and expected shrinkage. Even washable fabrics containing only a small percentage of fiber that is expected to shrink, need to be preshrunk for complete safety.

Consider Findings, Too . . .

When shrinking outer fabric, think in terms of entire garment. Be sure to shrink interfacings, under linings or backings, tape, and some linings. Hair canvas interfacing needs to be thoroughly dampened, dried and carefully steam pressed on lengthwise grain of fabric.

For washable fabrics, choose a method of drying similar to the method you plan to use for the finished garment.

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